

DPI Testimony: Wisconsin Education Committee 3.2.2023 Madison

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[00:00:00] Okay, next we're gonna hear from the Department of Public Instruction. Uh, we have **Laura Adams**, the policy Initiatives advisor for the state superintendent. **Due Nguyen** Assistant Superintendent for the Division of Academic Excellence, and **Tom McCarthy**, the executive director for the Office of the State,

[00:02:47] Well, good morning. Thank you for inviting the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to appear before this body today to make policy recommendations for early reading. My name is **Duy Nguyen** again, and I'm joined [00:03:00] as Assistant State Superintendent of Division Academic Excellence, uh, department staff.

[00:03:04] Joining me today to testify include policy initials, advisor Laura Adams and Tom McCarthy, the executive, the executive director. Uh, before I continue, I just want to thank Dr. Seidenberg for his, uh, testimony. We agree on, uh, many things. We agree that we still have a lot to learn as how to implement, how to look at best practices.

[00:03:27] We agree that teachers need to be part of the plan for this, and they need to be on board as Dr. Seidenberg spoke about and then we also agree that we can't put everything in one basket cuz we know that this is a complex issue. So thank you Dr. Seidenberg. So I'm honored to be the assistant state superintendent role, uh, as this crucial time in Wisconsin's educational story.

[00:03:52] Prior to this, I have served as a preschool teacher, a kindergarten teacher, a librarian, and a principal. [00:04:00] I'm also a dad of two young children, one almost turning four, who is learning to read and a fourth grader who is reading to learn from these many perspectives. I understand these roles are all central in teaching of reading to our youngest students.

[00:04:18] Teaching includes many things, learning each other's, learning each child's strengths, studying and respecting how they learn and supporting their natural lens of curiosity. We take all these things and apply them to reading. , we must provide opportunities and tools for students to learn to read. I am certain no one in this room is satisfied with reading outcomes for students in Wisconsin, which is why I'm confident we will improve when we work together.

[00:04:54] The department has been actively discussing areas where we agree on policy recommendations with both [00:05:00] Republican and Democrat members of this legisla of our legislature. And the recommendations you hear today reflect those conversations. We each have a role to play in working towards our shared goal that all Wisconsin students or readers, we believe there are places we can make policy to have impact.

[00:05:22] Supporting our teachers to be competent and confident by creating policy focused on instructional materials and educator preparation. Revising our statute on

the reading readiness screener and leveraging Dr. Under Lee's budget to fund statewide reading coaches and support evidence-based early reading instruction.

[00:05:46] With that, I will have **Ms. Adams** share with you these recommendations in greater detail. Thank you. Good morning. As Assistant State Superintendent **Duy Nguyen** stated, [00:06:00] we need to improve reading in Wisconsin. We are all in agreement on that, and we have been working in a bipartisan way to come up with policy solutions to directly impact reading achievement in a positive way for the state of Wisconsin.

[00:06:15] Our first recommendation is in the area of ensuring that we have a competent and confident teacher workforce in Wisconsin at the Department of Public Instruction. We have been paying very close attention to what other states have been doing. And especially those states that have been making gains in early reading achievement, we know that many of those states, including Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Michigan, Nebraska, and many others, are now maintaining a list of recommended instructional materials in English Language arts, which includes early reading and mathematics, K-12.

[00:06:54] Therefore, our first recommendation is that Wisconsin also develop and maintain a list [00:07:00] of recommended instructional materials, including those instructional materials that include evidence-based early reading, instructional practices. By maintaining such a list, we would be empowering our teachers to be able to focus on the how of teaching rather than the what, which is something that Dr.

[00:07:20] Seidenberg was referring to in his presentation. At the same time, it is important for us to recognize that simply giving educators different materials will not automatically equate to gains in reading achievement. Our educators need ongoing professional learning and supports in order to implement changes that may be uncomfortable for them.

[00:07:45] Therefore, our policy recommendation is at the same time to attend to the need to provide ongoing professional learning and supports to educators to use those new materials or to implement those [00:08:00] evidence-based reading instructional practices. There's room for differentiation here. Within this policy recommendation, we could, for example, choose to provide more intensive supports to those school districts and independent charter schools that are experiencing the most extreme opportunity or achievement gap.

[00:08:19] Or we could choose to direct our most intensive supports to those districts and independent charter schools that are consistently seeing the lowest proficiency rates among their youngest learners. Our second policy, uh, recommendation, again, is in the area of ensuring that we have a competent and confident teacher workforce, and it is directly related to our educator preparation programs.

[00:08:47] We know that in Wisconsin, we have an existing state statute that identifies some of the components of evidence-based early reading instruction that educator

preparation programs are required to include in their [00:09:00] coursework. In addition to that, of course, we have the Wisconsin Foundations of Reading Test that our teachers must pass in order to gain initial licensure.

[00:09:12] What we know is that that state statute that identifies the components of early reading, instructional, uh, evidence based early reading instruction that needs to be included in our educator preparation. Coursework is quite old at this point. Our recommendation is to review that state statute, make sure that it accurately identifies all of the evidence-based early reading instructional practices that should be included in our E P P coursework.

[00:09:44] At the same time, we also know that just like in the K-12 system, our instructors in ed prep programs also need ongoing professional learning and supports. What we see is that in Mississippi, one of the things that they [00:10:00] did was they offered professional learning on evidence-based early reading instructional practices to their instructors in their ED prep programs.

[00:10:09] Mississippi and Michigan also provide. Specific resources that need to be included in their ED prep programs in the area of reading. So again, we hope that, uh, this policy recommendation includes some supports for our ED prep programs rather than just a stick or a law or a statute at this time. I also really want to make a connection here to Wisconsin Motion 57 Wisconsin Motion 57 of course, outlines exactly what DPI must do with our state set aside portion of s r three funds.

[00:10:50] One of the line items in Wisconsin Motion 57 directly connects to our ED prep programs and reading. It states that Wisconsin will [00:11:00] contract with a vendor who will conduct an analysis of reading program coursework in our UW institutions. After engaging in our very robust and required state procurement process, the Department of Administration selected a vendor for that work.

[00:11:15] [That vendor is TPI](#) Today, March 2nd, ironically, national Read Across America Day. Uh, that vendor is meeting with the deans of our Schools of Education in the UW system in order to provide details and timelines about that opportunity. The other thing that Motion 57 provides for is additional funds for grants for those UW systems that want to make changes to their courses.

[00:11:44] Based on the findings and the report of that vendor, T P I us, I bring this to your attention to remind us of an existing policy that is currently in the early stages of implementation that could also have a real impact on [00:12:00] reading achievement in Wisconsin. We are definitely taking both and approaches in every step of the way.

[00:12:08] Our third recommendation is in the area of assessment. Many states followed Wisconsin's lead by requiring a reading readiness screener for all students in grades 4K through grade two at the same time that 2014 statute was revised in 2016 to allow each independent charter school and school district to select their own reading readiness screener.

[00:12:35] We agree that having a reading readiness screener to identify those learners who need additional supports in their reading development is critical and invaluable, but it is only valuable if our educators know how to act on the data and the results of that screener. One of the drawbacks of now having so many different screeners in the state is that D P I is [00:13:00] not able to provide professional learning opportunities to our educators.

[00:13:04] About how to use the data from that screener in order to intervene and tailor their instruction to the needs of our learners who need it the most. Therefore, our recommendation in this area is to actually revert back to the 2014 statute that requires one common reading readiness screener for the state, and also providing an appropriation for professional learning funds so that we can provide the supports to our educators so that they know how to act on the data appropriately to intervene and support our developing readers at the youngest grades.

[00:13:51] You have already heard us talk about the need for professional learning supports to make some of these policy recommendations effective. [00:14:00] We also know that many states that have seen increases in early reading achievement have invested in a combination of both evidence-based trainings as well as professional learning and coaches.

[00:14:14] Mississippi employs 78 regional reading coaches to support its teachers in implementing new instructional materials and in implementing those evidence-based early reading instructional practices, we know that Motion 57 also allowed all of our school districts a one-time grant opportunity to allow them to participate in either letters or another evidence-based reading training.

[00:14:44] And the vast majority of our districts and independent charter schools are currently engaged in that training through those funds provided through Motion 57. But the piece that's missing is that support piece. I think that many of us can, uh, think of a [00:15:00] time that we were required to sit in a training and then just went back to our jobs and just did the same old, same old after we were done.

[00:15:09] That's why we believe that training piece is so critical. The state superintendent's budget proposal closed that loophole by offering a suggested appropriation, asking for an appropriation for 26 regional coaches throughout the state of Wisconsin in order to provide those ongoing learning supports, either to implement new curricula or to, uh, support our educators in implementing those evidence-based early reading instructional practices.

[00:15:42] In addition to that, our state superintendent's budget proposal includes funds for targeted community-based programs, including ones that Dr. Seidenberg mentioned, Wisconsin Reading Corps and Literacy Lab. , those particular community-based programs [00:16:00] are specific, would specifically be targeted for those areas of the state where we're seeing the greatest achievement gaps or the most persistent, um, low proficiency levels of our students.

[00:16:13] Therefore, we hope that you advocate for these particular budget items in order to support early reading in Wisconsin. At this time, I'm actually going to turn the presentation over to my colleague **Tom McCarthy** so that he can talk a little bit more about how we can leverage the budget process in order to support early reading achievement in Wisconsin.

[00:16:38] Thanks Laura and Duy. Um, so I get to be the guy that brings the bad news to you, cuz I think there's a, there's a ton of opportunity in this conversation and I think you're gonna hear a lot of what we said today and what Dr. Seidenberg said reflected in Dr. Burke and in the Luxemburg Casco reading specialist that are gonna be talking to you last.

[00:16:55] but I gotta bring some of the real reality, which is that our schools are in dire straits in [00:17:00] terms of, uh, a need for revenue growth to be able to sustain some of the stuff that we're talking about here. What we don't wanna see is a very good conversation about reading that you all drop in money in a one-time or even a weaning fashion that goes away, and then all of the results in performance disappear.

[00:17:16] And the way around that is by investing in our school districts, it is by letting them catch back up with real inflationary needs. And it's by helping them solve the fiscal cliff that we created in the state together around use of, uh, emergency pandemic relief dollars. Right now they're sustaining operations across the state and they're, they're plugging in one time costs.

[00:17:34] And that bill is gonna come due in 2024 when that money disappears. Um, so it's, it's a real warning. And, and I, we need your help because when we talk to superintendents, board members and communities about this, they're terrified. They, they don't want to spend those dollars and then watch all of the things that they're investing in disappear tomorrow when that money goes away.

[00:17:51] Okay. Related to that is the state's continuing real need to have an investment in special education reimbursement rates. When we're talking about special education, I [00:18:00] think a lot of people have a thing in their mind that is the average special education student or student experiencing disabilities.

[00:18:06] And I'm here to dispel you of that myth and say that most of the kids who qualify for those services at some time in their career will exit those services. A lot of those kids are the kids who are struggling to read. If we want to make a real investment that is going to be sound, we need to end the practice of shifting money around in school districts to make sure that their guarantees are being made on the special education side at the cost of other kids.

[00:18:28] That is not fair to districts, and we need to do something to plug that hole. Um, I, I'm here to tell you that we, we want to engage with all of you on a conversation that continues forward or around mental health and wellbeing in our communities. I'm, I'm also gonna be vulnerable and tell you that I'm not sure schools are the answer to that, but right now they are sort of the front door delivery service.

[00:18:47] And they're not equipped to be. So if we wanna look at funding counties for those services, if we wanna look at funding school districts, actual private providers, I do not care. The issue is so tremendous and we need to get our arms around it. And I think when you [00:19:00] put all of these things together, if we're actually making those sorts of sound investments and issues that you all care about, like reading issues that we're telling you school districts need, like revenue growth, a change in special education, reimbursement rates, and figuring out a, so a solution to this mental health crisis, you'll see an easing of the workforce crisis that I'm sure superintendents and school boards have told you about.

[00:19:18] We can't find reading teachers, we can't find special education teachers. It's cuz they can't A, afford them. And b, the job is not as attractive because of the tremendous weight that lives in schools to solve society's problems. Um, so sorry. I'm really excited about this reading conversation. I think we've got some really positive work.

[00:19:35] I want to commend, uh, chairman Kitchens chairperson Jagger for digging in with us. I know we're not seen all over, uh, the legislature as like the great unifier. You probably think of us as a, a bunch of wild hippies, but we care deeply about this and we're willing to work with whoever shows up in genuine ways.

[00:19:52] And we don't necessarily care whose name goes on the homework. We just want to get stuff done for kids. Um, so I hope you take that seriously. We want to be [00:20:00] your partners. And I'm gonna kick it back over to **Duy** to kind of close us out here. Thanks Tom. Thanks Tom for connecting the dots and making sure that we see the broader picture.

[00:20:09] So in that same vein, I'm gonna try and make some connections here as well. So it's important to note that these recommendations for improving early reading achievement can be, strength, can be strengthened by connecting them. For example, if Wisconsin utilizes a single reading readiness screener, resources on how to use the results to inform instruction could be a part of professional learning that is used in educator prep programs.

[00:20:35] As a result, new teachers would already have the skills and knowledge to utilize the screener to support reading development. If Wisconsin develops and maintains a list of recommended instructional materials, those instructional materials could be utilized in educator prep programs as well. Resulting in a workforce that already has a famili familiarity with specific evidence based early reading instruction.
[00:21:00]

[00:21:01] Our school systems are ecosystems. Everything affects everything. As a principal, I experienced this firsthand. Our goal was to improve outcomes for our kids, especially reading. And yet there were so many competing demands for my time. Are there enough teachers to staff every classroom today? That was the daily conversation.

[00:21:27] Handfuls of students are arriving, uh, late to school, checking in, making sure that they're okay, and they're ready to learn. Who's able to get to the classroom quickly that needs extra support to address? The significant mental health concerns for a particular student. As a principal, I am that extra support.

[00:21:49] I know we talked about change, but I think our educators and our administrators are used to change. We step into that school. The only thing that we know is that we will expect the [00:22:00] unexpected. They need us to do our part to enact policies that allow educators to think, to learn, and to grow their skills without tipping them over.

[00:22:13] So in conclusion, we support our teachers by creating policies focused on instructional materials and educator prep programs, revising our statutes on the reading readiness screener, and leveraging Dr. Underly's budget to fund reading coaches and support evidence-based early reading instruction. Thank you for your attention.

[00:22:35] And now we'd like to take some of this time to end. Answer your questions.

Rep Joel Kitchens: Okay. Well, thank you all for being in here today. Appreciate it. And I appreciate that we've had a lot of conversations about this. I, and frankly, I was surprised at the beginning of the session when I reached out that we were, as, as you know, as much in agreement as, as we have been, um, with the reading coaches.

[00:22:57] And we've, I won't ask a lot of questions. We've, most [00:23:00] of these we've talked about, but, uh, with the reading coaches, um, how do you envision that though, to, to hire these people? Where are they gonna come from? And it would seem that the most effective coaches are, and again we'll hear from the one from Luxemburg, Casco are the ones that are within that school district.

[00:23:15] And for us, you know, as a state, out of the state budget, I can't imagine us this being an ongoing pro, you know, problem. We need to retrain teachers and provide the coaching, but we can't, you know, hopefully then once the universities step up and are teaching as they should be, we won't have to continue that.

[00:23:32] But anyway. How do you envision that with the coaches? I. Yes.

[00:23:38] **Laura Adams DPI:** I think that the first thing, uh, that we again, want to recognize is the fact that, uh, Mississippi, which has a fewer number of schools than Wisconsin, employs 78 and we are asking for 26 coaches, um, in the state superintendent's budget proposal at 10, 10 million a year. So that's the first thing that, that really needs to be, needs to be acknowledged.[00:24:00]

[00:24:00] Given that, and obviously knowing that those coaches would not be able to be in every school in the state, it's about targeting our resources to where they are needed. It's true that we may have expert educators who may be interested in transitioning into a coaching role and applying for those positions.

[00:24:24] I think that there are many different forms that the implementation of that policy could take. Okay. Mississippi, their state department employs those coaches directly. We know we also have regional technical assistance centers in the form of what we call our cisa in the state. We could certainly, uh, look, look to our CISA and think about some models where we're, we are also utilizing some existing resources, um, through, through those centers.

[00:24:55] I think that there are many different ways that, that this could, that this could look, [00:25:00] yeah.

Tom McCarthy DPI: Can, can I just jump in and hammer home? The thing that Laura was, was finishing on there, is that we need our regional partners. We, we need people boots on the ground in schools to be able to do this effectively.

[00:25:09] And as I've kind of tried to drag out for you all, there's, there's kind of a policy tension of time and magnitude that exists on that same continuum of cost. If you want this to be more intensive, go faster and be offered to more schools in a timely fashion, it's gonna be more expensive. If we wanted to bite the elephant in small chunks, we can do it in a, in a cheaper way.

[00:25:29] And that's where we need you all as partners to tell us like, what, where is the, where's the appetite for this? How much elephant do you want to eat today?

Rep Joel Kitchens: Okay. Um, thanks. And I will say, I, one piece I had not heard before was that you are now working with curriculum with the colleges and universities.

[00:25:45] That's encouraging, cuz I mean, that's gonna, that's that, that's a recommendation That sound like you had started some of that. No.

Laura Adams DPI: Motion 57 um, allows for some work to be done in our ed prep programs with an outside vendor. Um, the, the [00:26:00] State Department of Ed, uh, has, has always been there to, to be an available partner, but that partnership, uh, has not always been as formal in this area as perhaps we would like it to be.

[00:26:12] And so that is one of our recommendations.

Rep Joel Kitchens: Okay. Okay. Thanks. Uh,

Senator John Jagler, do you have anything? Yeah. Thank you. Um, Paula, I wish I had it in front of me then. Or up the recommendation number one, um, instructional materials. Yes. and I and then the, the recommendation was is you said identify rec, you know, a a list of recommended, don't you already have that in some degree?

[00:26:38] Because I was just looking at the, the Wisconsin Center for Educational Research found that you have identified 80% or 79% of the school districts in the state

aren't following what you already have recommended to some degree. Or can you, can you just explain that a little bit?

Tom McCarthy DPI: So, I think the, the tension that we're trying to [00:27:00] lay out for you all is that we've historically been a local control state and as we've tried to push into this conversation through activities like what we call the instructional materials, professional learning or impl, which is the, the resource you're citing, it's been sort of listless cuz what, what good does it get us for the state department to say your, your curriculum materials don't align to something that the national, uh, sea's that are having more strength to be able to do this provide.

[00:27:25] **Senator John Jagler:** So to, to that end. If you've already kind of identified some that you would recommend, and they're not the local, we are a local control state. I ran for state senate, not for Watertown school, district School board. But having said that, if 80% of the school districts aren't recommending what youth put out there on, on a general level, would you then support a, a type of bill that had included a package that, *that eliminated some of the bad programs and curriculum, the queuing method, fountain and Pinnell as, as the professor recommended.*

[00:27:59] Would you, [00:28:00] would you agree, uh, to give a thumbs up to that, at least eliminating the bad ones as he as he recommended?

Laura Adams DPI: As you said, we have approached this in a very general way, in a very soft way. It was not ever, uh, it was not ever, uh, formalized. Uh, we have some general resources. We, when school districts have.

[00:28:23] Called us to ask for our guidance. We point them in the direction of those resources, and we absolutely are interested in formalizing that further and, uh, doing what other states have done, like Mississippi and, and really creating a more formal recommended list. So, so you would rec,

Senator John Jagler: you would support putting a thumb on the scale of a local, because you know how this is what the, the local curriculum sellers, the peddlers, if you want, depending on the bad ones.

[00:28:51] They have a lot of razzle dazzle and they come in and they overwhelm these local administrators. And, and if, if you don't have the authority as dpi, you've clearly [00:29:00] stated you don't. We do. So would you support that as being part of this overall package?

Tom McCarthy DPI: I, I mean, I think the devil's in the details, right?

[00:29:09] Uh, we would love to sit down and continue the conversations that we've been having with Representative Kitchens, and I think you, you could be part of that group. We would love to have you in that group. because what you're talking about could be a very real implementation challenge with very real costs to some of these local districts.

[00:29:24] And then how are we making sure that that district that we have impacted doesn't just drive down into, as Dr. Seidenberg said, check the box type activities to make sure that they can operate. So I mean, I think the easy answer for me would be to say, oh yeah, this is great. Let's sign on tomorrow. But I, I think we need to be very cognizant of it as, um, Duy said it's complicated.

[00:29:44] This stuff is more challenging than just simply legislate with magic wand, but we wanna be part of the conversation.

Senator Robert Quinn R-Cameron: I believe had a question. Yeah. Excuse me. Thank you, uh, for being here. And it, it goes on the lines of Senator [00:30:00] Jaeger's questions. I guess I was a little confused then. So there is some, some list you sort of maintain now that you do recommend or not.

[00:30:07] And my other question is, um, you know, why don't you just do that? You mentioned Wisconsin should follow suit that other states do that. Mississippi, Michigan. . Um, why, why don't you just do that now? I don't, you don't need us to do that. Right? So can we maintain that list or recommend that? So I have a district that just recently, in the last couple of years, um, started moving in the science of reading direction and I asked them, and they were pretty much on their own doing that, knowing what they were doing wasn't working.

[00:30:36] Um, and so that would be my question is why don't you maintain that list now then if that's a recommendation for us?

[00:30:46] **Laura Adams DPI:** Right now, we are pointing to what other states do. I think it would be more useful to have a, to have a recommended list that is endorsed by Wisconsin based on criteria that [00:31:00] Wisconsin develops. Right. So, and I do see that as being, as being a difference. **Tom McCarthy DPI:** And I, and I think your policy question, why don't we do it right now, is we do not have the legal authority to do it.

[00:31:09] We can't go into a district and say, you must take this reading grant. **Senator Robert Quinn:** Right. And I'm not saying that's not even what she just suggested is. , why don't you have the list now of this is what we do recommend. Not saying DPI can make us stake it, but what's keeping you from doing that right now? **Laura Adams DPI:** As I said, right now, we point to other states Sure.

[00:31:27] And we point to the criteria that other states are using, and so districts certainly could, um, are free to use those. The other thing that we know is that there are many of our districts that are currently using their SR three A dollars to invest in new curriculum and, uh, including our five largest districts in the state, and we know that those are the resources that they're using.

[00:31:52] Sure. To select instructional materials. I think that what we want to do is, is, is formalize that, as I [00:32:00] said, and make sure that we're not just pointing to the

work of other states, but that we're doing the, the work of having the hard conversation in Wisconsin of what are the criteria that's important to Wisconsin and.

[00:32:12] and putting that together in a formal way. **Tom McCarthy DPI:** And, and I think the other thing, we're talking about a paradigm shifting conversation. The approach of an ssea in the state of Wisconsin, and we're also dealing with some tenuous political straits where sometimes in certain areas, if we sneeze the wrong direction, we get sued by someone.

[00:32:28] So we want to come here with you and have this conversation openly that we're willing to make a paradigm shift, but we also don't want to get ourselves in hot water with that situation if we're gonna push in in a way that is not in collaboration and lockstep with the things that this body wants. **Laura Adams DPI:** The other, the other thing that I would add is at the same time, we, we absolutely want to learn from those districts that are doing well in reading.

[00:32:51] And so one of the things that we want to explore is what are the instructional materials that are being used in those districts that are doing [00:33:00] well in reading, and they're not always the instructional materials. Uh, that are showing up on the list of other states. And so that's part of the reason why we need to investigate this a little bit further in order to really develop our own criteria.

[00:33:13] **Senator Robert Quinn:** I think. I guess just to follow up on that, what do you need from the legislature to be able to do that? Right? Because I don't, I don't think there's anything preventing you from, you know, if, if one of my districts calls you and say, Hey, what do you recommend recommending? You know, this is what we've seen other states here.

[00:33:28] If you're gonna buy a new curriculum and go on a road, you should do this. Right? So is there anything that prevents that now, or are you just saying We're just in the early process of doing that? **Laura Adams DPI:** There's nothing that prevents that now. There's not many districts that reach out to us and asks that now ha by saying, here's Wisconsin's recommended list that would really force our districts to pay more attention to us.

[00:33:51] **Senator Robert Quinn:** Sure. And just one more follow up, um, if I could on. proposed 26, um, positions, I don't know if we call them reading [00:34:00] specialists or reading coaches, um, you know, memory, uh, mimicking some of what Mississippi does. You've highlighted, um, going back to, uh, representative Kitchen's point, you know, how would that play out?

[00:34:12] Um, what part of the problem we've heard from the doctor before is, uh, I mean we already have reading specialists in schools. Now we already have different forms of districts trying to do those things, but it comes back to who are those people and how are they trained, right? So how would we know that adding 26 positions to go into districts to help them maybe make a shift?

[00:34:32] I mean, who's determining who those 26 people are and what is their educational background? Or are we just exacerbating what's, what's already going on? How do you, how would that play out if, if that were to go forward? **Laura Adams DPI:** Yeah, absolutely. That's a very good question. I think that in, when we look at the state of Mississippi example, that's why it is their State Department of Education that, um, employs those coaching.

[00:34:54] Is their State Department of Education then has control over the training. They provide a [00:35:00] specific evidence-based early reading instructional training to those coaches before they deploy them out into the, into the schools. And the other thing that I think is important to, to lift up here is that we do have an existing state statute that requires that every school district in Wisconsin employ a district reading specialist.

[00:35:20] The state statute does not say anything about the FTE that should be included in that district reading specialist. And of course, there's no funding to go along with that. And someone who has a district reading specialist license has, that's actually an administrative license. And so in theory, if, if I am a teacher and I, um, engage in that advanced coursework to get that advanced administrative degree, , I, I probably wanna pay off for that, right?

[00:35:51] Because now I have some really specialized knowledge. Um, and, and right now our, our districts are not in the position of being able to [00:36:00] provide appropriate salaries. And so because of that, the way that our school districts, um, actually implement that state statute is in a variety of ways. Some of our school districts do employ a district reading specialist who operates exactly as that person should. Some of our school districts employ someone and 0.15 of that individual's contract is to serve as the district's reading specialist.

[00:36:28] And 0.85 of that person's contract is to be the third grade teacher because what they really need is a third grade teacher. And what does that mean? That means that that person, even if they have the right license and the right expertise and the right knowledge, they're not able to function in the way our state statute says that they should be functioning as a district reading special.

[00:36:48] List others of our districts will contract with our regional service providers, the cisa, and many of our cisa's employee staff who have that license and then, um, [00:37:00] contract out small amounts of their time to their districts so that the district, um, can provide those statutorily required services. So while we do have that state statute in existence, *I would also argue that it's not actually being implemented in a way that's, uh, that's, that's effective right now ultimately for, for our educators or our students.*

[00:37:23] **Rep Joel Kitchens:** I'm gonna ask just a little follow up related to that. Um, clearly one of the things that's gonna need to take place is enforcement. And that hasn't been a strong suit for DPI over the years. Um, and I think Dr. Seidenberg alluded to it that we don't, what we don't want is districts saying, oh yeah, we're doing science of reading, and they're not really doing that.

[00:37:41] So, are you guys prepared to take on a little more enforcement role if we're gonna put these things into place to make sure that what we're paying for is actually what's happening? **Laura Adams DPI:** I think that there are many ways that we can explore accountability in each of the different recommendations that we have offered up.

[00:37:56] Um, when I think about, uh, when I think about that [00:38:00] recommendation regarding the reading readiness screener, for example, perhaps, um, a place of accountability would be to explore the idea of having our school districts create an individualized reading plan for each student that falls below benchmark on the screener, very clearly articulating exactly how they, they're going to serve the needs of that reader.

[00:38:23] So I think there, there are ways that we can explore accountability in each of those different recommendations. Okay. Uh, representative Shelton can, can I just tail onto that though a little bit? Um, the, the other problem that you're gonna run into with the accountability question is, We have 421 school districts and you're, you're talking about a system where we're cracking open data and information and conversations with a lot of human beings.

[00:38:46] And right now, implementing all of the federal funding that we have and doing all of this extra work that's come through the pandemic, which we love, uh, we did not get the significant amount of funding that we needed to do that in a very high quality level. So I just don't now want [00:39:00] to repeat that mistake again.

[00:39:01] If we get into a conversation about accountability, we're gonna need something in terms of human capacity to do this. Even if we ship it out to cis, you don't like us, we suck at accountability. Sure. Great. Someone's gotta do the work. Otherwise, it is empty hollow accountability, which is exactly what you're talking about.

[00:39:17] Yeah. Again, when we look at other states, Wisconsin currently employs two full-time literacy specialists to serve 421 public school districts and over 30 independent charter schools. Mississippi, um, employs three full-time staff that are just focused on K three reading. just K three reading, uh, Massachusetts, which is smaller than Wisconsin, employs five literacy focused staff.

[00:39:44] So that's, yep. It is a good point to, um, just take a look at the, the different resources in, in how those resources are being deployed in those states that are seeing reading gains. Okay. Before I turn it over to the representative Shelton, uh, I think [00:40:00] what I'd like to do, if it works for you guys, it's like 1152 is at noon.

[00:40:04] Bring on Dr. Burke and let her, and then if you guys are around and you can come back up if there are questions following that, I don't want to cut her off. So, representative Shelton. **Rep. Kristina Shelton:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. I have seven minutes. Okay. Um, so the first thing I, I would like to just make a general recommendation to our members here that I think another step beyond today would be

to hear directly from those in the teacher prep programs in the state to hear more about those.

[00:40:31] Efforts and how we can support them and learn more about what they're doing to teach the teachers that actually are in the classroom. So just the flag. The other thing I wanna mention is that, you know, the curriculum conversation is really tough because it's incredibly expensive. For districts, for a district like Green Bay, which is in my district, it would cost millions of dollars.

[00:40:52] Um, and so I think we have to really keep at the forefront of our mind, there is a significant need if we're going to invest in reading [00:41:00] and literacy to fully fund these programs. Um, because as we heard from Dr. Seidenberg, a curriculum itself is not going to solve the problem, right? It is about supporting our teachers so that they have the foundational content knowledge and the pedagogical best practices in their toolbox.

[00:41:18] And the best way we can teach and support our students is to by have the, be by having the best teachers with the best toolbox and the best professional development in the classroom. But what I wanna ask you all today is about the workforce challenges, right? We have a, a, our, our teachers right now are burnt out.

[00:41:38] They're anxious, they're reporting high levels of stress. They're leaving the classroom in high numbers after five years. Uh, we got an email a few weeks ago from a reading specialist who said she was being moved out of that role during the day to cover in subclass because of the staffing challenges and the substitute challenges.

[00:41:58] So when I think about this, for me, [00:42:00] it's really a workforce focus. I was doing a little bit of research about what some other states are doing. Indiana 111 million for phonic focus, phonics focus instruction, 85 million for teacher training, 1200 for ST 1200, um, dollars for stipends. And what I was thinking about is if we are investing in teachers, but we don't address the retention issue, Then we are significantly investing in people who are going to walk out the door because they're anxious and stressed out and burnt out.

[00:42:36] So I'm wondering how you can help me make this connection of, we're talking about this, but it really is a workforce challenge. I'm curious on your thoughts on that. Thank you. Thank you. **Duy Nguyen:** Representative Shelton. I think the idea around working conditions is real. It's real because we know that, and I want to put it in this space that predominantly our [00:43:00] teaching profession, especially in elementary schools, are female.

[00:43:04] And if you go deeper into early childhood and early childhood teachers, we're talking about 96%. So I think that we definitely have to have a conversation around training and respect and a conversation around working conditions, better working conditions. Our salary has not been up to just the standard.

[00:43:27] So I just wanna put that in this space. So that's one. The other piece is that our educators are seeing that this profession is kind of like a pre-care to go into something else because as far as scaling up teaching is the profession. Scaling up means they're leaving for better pay as an administrator or a superintendent.

[00:43:52] So I just want to bring that into context and just the idea that we have to do something better because we [00:44:00] are losing our educators. Retention matters. Especially when we are talking about if we're training, if they're leaving the first five years and we're talking about professional development costing approx approximately 50,000 a year, they leave, we lose that as well.

[00:44:21] **Laura Adams DPI:** I think the other thing that we can talk about is, uh, , something that many people often say is that they're not getting into teaching because of the pay, right? They're getting into teaching because they love education. They are passionate about education, but at the same time, salary matters. Getting cost of living increases matters in order to stay in the profession.

[00:44:46] And the other thing that matters is feeling supported. One of the ways that our educators can feel supported is by having ongoing professional learning and supports, including time in their day. And maybe that means that we're offering models [00:45:00] about how to be more creative to allow for those kinds of time commitments and professional learning opportunities for our educators.

[00:45:09] ***It's important to note here that while while many states, um, went in the direction of eliminating lifetime teaching licenses in order to add professional learning requirements, in Wisconsin, we did the opposite. We used to have professional learning requirements for our educators, and we eliminated those in the favor of having lifetime licenses.***

[00:45:33] And I think that that means that our educators don't have any incentive to continue professional learning because if there there, if there's no incentive for them to continue that professional learning, why, why would they? We're gonna kind of hit you with the 1, 2, 3. **Tom McCarthy DPI:** I just want to get one last thing in on this and then you can cut me off real fast.

[00:45:55] Um, I, I promise I can do this. I talked, we've kind of gotten way off topic here. To be honest. I think this will [00:46:00] drive it back home for you though. We don't, we don't have ladders in the career to incentivize people to become reading instructors, reading coaches. That lifetime license piece was the only ladder that existed and we cut it off.

[00:46:10] So what is the incentive for somebody to want to learn these new skills? We're talking about the statutory mandates, but you know, what is the incentive for somebody to teach in a very high need class where reading is going to be a legitimate real challenge? Doesn't exist. That's part of the problem. Uh, Senator Johnson, I think, do you still have a question?

[00:46:27] **Senator LaTonya Johnson:** Get to go first. Thank you. Um, I know you had said earlier that, um, your professional learning funds were not present, right? Um, in the budget. I thought you said something similar to that, that you needed additional dollars for professional learning funds. If there isn't money allocated for professional learning, then who pays for that?

[00:46:52] And how does the staff get those services? **Laura Adams DPI:** It completely comes out of local funds, and so it's [00:47:00] dependent upon the budget of each individual school district or independent charter school, um, as well as the, the amount of time that they have. **Senator LaTonya Johnson:** So the schools are currently paying for that themselves rather than d dpi?

[00:47:15] **Laura Adams DPI:** Yes. DPI does offer, um, some. no cost professional learning in the form of archived webinars on our website, because that's what we are able to offer equitably, statewide, including, um, a, a webinar series that I, that I really wanna highlight because I feel pretty excited about it. We have a whole webinar series currently on our site that highlights evidence-based early reading instructional practices.

[00:47:46] Unfortunately, it was published, uh, in school year 20 20, 20 21, which was maybe not a great time to, uh, highlight such a high leverage, uh, high leverage resource. **Senator LaTonya Johnson:** How many coaches do we currently have [00:48:00] right now in the system to, um, that you can allocate to schools? **Laura Adams DPI:** That's, that's a good question. And I, yeah, to be honest, I, I'm not sure.

[00:48:10] I know that our well-resourced districts employ their own coaches. I was absolutely happy to hear more details about Mississippi's model. And we would absolutely want to advocate for targeting any coaches, um, that came through our appropriation to those schools that need it the most. **Senator LaTonya Johnson:** And one last question.

[00:48:33] I know that, um, our last speaker talked about to ensure consistency and practice and quality that their coaches and things are through their kind of like D P I system. You mentioned earlier that something about the Sing single Ready Reading screener, and I, I think she mentioned that too. But you also mentioned that, [00:49:00] um, I guess the schools use their own.

[00:49:03] So how many is it each individual district uses their own model or each individual schools and exactly how many models are being used current. **Laura Adams DPI:** Currently, the way that our state statute is, um, is worded is that each individual school district and independent charter has the independent authority to select the reading readiness screener that they want to use.

[00:49:30] In theory, that means that they could select more than one and administer more than one even across, uh, a school district or independent charter school system. *What our data shows is that last year there were 36 different screeners that were used*

across the state. **Senator LaTonya Johnson:** Thank you. Those are all the questions I have.

[00:49:46] Okay. Uh, **Representative Cindi Ducow.** Thank you. Um, actually my question was, was somewhat answered. I'm sure you were in the room. I was interested in what Mississippi spends per student versus Wisconsin and find [00:50:00] out that, that we spend more than Florida and Mississippi. So, um, I'm just curious if you know how they can do this more effectively with less money.

[00:50:09] **Tom McCarthy DPI:** I, I think I would caution and just kind of give a giant pause on comparing state across systems because there are some different intricacies to how people calculate funding. Um, I do think that there are some, some ways in which some of those states have figured out how to leverage grouping of federal funds in a way to support a targeted initiative like reading.

[00:50:29] So I, I think you are, you're tipping on to something that we have been working on in this administration of how do we collectively harness all of that authority and power and use it in one consistent way. Uh, I would argue that if you, if you are looking at that in a true apples to apples comparison, that would be the difference maker that you could make.

[00:50:50] **Rep Cindi Ducow:** So you're saying that they have federal money that they're using, I'm saying every state has federal money that they can use to, to target initiatives. **Tom McCarthy DPI:** So if you're asking if, if [00:51:00] apples to apples was truly a thing that existed in those state finance numbers, which I don't believe having dug in and researched.

[00:51:06] That they are truly apples to apples. If you're asking me what Florida and Mississippi has done from a funding perspective that Wisconsin could do a better job of it is to align federal interventions and supports around a singular policy goal to try to drive improvement. **Rep Cindi Ducow:** Thank you. I think I'll, I'll have to do some research on it myself.

[00:51:26] Thank you. Okay, **Senator Stroebel:** Um, I'd follow up on that a little bit actually. Looking at, uh, US census data, all funds, all sources. Um, Wisconsin's at about 13,000 and Mississippi is about 9,200. Is there significant That's per the US census data, all funds, all sources, so pretty clear there. I think it's, uh, we're 23rd.

[00:51:50] They're 47th. So, which I think bears out with her, uh, slide up there that showed that we spend, uh, about 37% more in education funding, uh, [00:52:00] than, than they do. But, um, one thing I want to talk about, you know, we're here to talk about, okay. How are we gonna improve reading and what's the best technique to do that?

[00:52:09] And you talk about reading coaches and the resources and the things we're doing to improve reading. It kind of seems like we're beating the head against beating, we're beating our head against the wall when we're really not using the right

techniques. I mean, we can throw all the money in the world and if we're not doing it the right way, we're not gonna see results.

[00:52:28] I mean, do you agree? Am I off the, am I crazy about that? Or what? We absolutely agree. **Laura Adams DPI**: Which is why that, why we are advocating not only for a recommended instructional materials list, but also resources to address the how, how our educators use those materials in order to provide the instruction to implement the evidence-based early reading, uh, instructional practices.

[00:52:52] And, and the same thing at, at higher ed, not only looking at the state statute to ensure that what we're requiring of [00:53:00] our higher ed programs includes all of the components. **Sen Stroebel**: Of early evidence-based, early reading practices, but that we also are in the position of providing them with some of the, how, well, it's kind of too bad that we've got the smartest people at our universities, and yet we have to create a law to tell them how to teach.

[00:53:22] I mean, I don't get that, you know, that's weird. Um, you'd think they should be the ones who would know the innovative ways to teach, not that us legislators have to create legislation to tell them how to teach the way, uh, scientific data shows should be taught. So I guess my point is that, you know, yes.

[00:53:40] Blaming on universities. Sure. Um, but we're, um, spending money on all these things and we're really not doing it right. So I, I guess the focus is, I mean, the 15 million they do a year. I mean, that's a drop in the bucket. But you know, when you look at the overall spending and when you look at. What we're [00:54:00] spending now today to teach, uh, a curriculum that's ineffective.

[00:54:04] I think maybe we really wanna focus on, okay, how do we, I'm sad to say, have to retrain our teachers from what they learned at the university system. And, um, I, I, I think that that should be our focus. And after that, I feel very confident that once our teachers have been trained properly, that they're gonna be able to deliver this content and our kids are gonna be able to excel.

[00:54:25] So, um, I'm not sure, you know, if it's that much, uh, money that we're really even talking about here, considering when you look at the overall big picture I'm spending and kind of the fundamental flaw that we're really trying to tackle at this point in time. So I guess that's what, uh, I'd have to say.

[00:54:43] Thanks. Okay. Uh, **Senator Chris Larson**, and I hope we can keep it to discussing reading. Get too far. Yeah. Um, thank you. Um, and I'm, I'm just kind of, I, I appreciate this as, as we did end up pairing these things together. , um, I didn't get a chance to ask [00:55:00] the, the, the last speaker, um, you know, for the work that they did and the, the, the, um, uh, in Mississippi to be able to raise their scores.

[00:55:08] The question I, I asked, I guess is it pertains to you too, is in, uh, you know, is the funding portion of it. Uh, because I obviously, if we're just looking at just a, a

sliver of time and then not looking at the whole picture, um, I think that that ends up lending itself to giving us not the full information.

[00:55:34] Um, and so just looking at, are you familiar, there's a website, national Center for Education Statistics that kind of compares the different scores in terms of where we are in terms of reading. And I'm just, I'm just scratching my head because as much as we're talking about what Mississippi has done, just looking at the data from 2019, it says that in fourth grade, Mississippi was higher than seven states.

[00:55:56] Compared to Wisconsin, which is higher than nine states. So we're, [00:56:00] we're pretty close already. But then when we go to eighth grade scores, um, you probably already know this, do you know what happens? So Mississippi is higher than three states, and Wisconsin is higher than 36. Um, so I, I think that there's, as we're looking at, at where we are in terms of, of funding and being able to say where, what the overall picture is, it's, I mean, you can, you know, I think of the, the, uh, the story that's told probably in across different religious, um, disciplines about the story of the blind, three blind men examining an elephant, right?

[00:56:41] And so you can look at a piece of it and say, my gosh, look at, look at this. Um, but I, I think it's, it's worth looking at the, the whole picture. Um, So my question is, is the impact of funding as we're kind of, that, that seems to be the, um, the center of the universe that we are orbiting around. And I'm just curious because again, [00:57:00] even as we look at entire states, that is not equal across the board.

[00:57:03] Right. And, uh, outcomes are not equal across the board. Heck, even per pupil funding is not equal across the board as sure as heck is in within my own school district. Um, so I'm curious if you can talk about the, the, uh, correlation of disproportionate funding and the impact on reading scores.

[00:57:22] **Tom McCarthy DPI:** Yeah, I mean, I, I just, I have to acknowledge this before I start. Um, what's the old advantage? There are lies, damn lies and statistics. Uh, I, I think you can find a number to support a lot of cases when you dive into education, funding all of these other numbers games. Um, but your questions are really good. One, Senator Larson, because we have a funding system that was locked into place in 1993, 94.

[00:57:43] based on how much people spent in that particular window of time. And if you fast forward or catapult into where we are right now, and I would argue the modern world, um, things have changed. People in those schools that look differently, significantly, they have different needs. Uh, and, and yet we are locked into that spending pattern and habit.

[00:57:59] [00:58:00] We need to stay on track here, though, we're getting off. Again, the proportionality is massive and, and it directly impacts how you're able to resource and fund reading at the local level. So you're talking about some districts having an eight, almost a \$9,000 revenue limit. How are they gonna make up the, the added difference between a Nicolet High school district that has an 18, \$19,000 revenue

limit, Nikolai High School District is gonna be able to employ more reading coaches, more direct reading supports.

[00:58:24] They're gonna be able to upgrade their reading curriculum, whereas that \$9,000 district is not going to have the same resources to target reading initiatives. So while it feels like you can pull these apart a little bit, it has a direct impact. Okay. Uh, Senator Johnson, if we, if you have a. Yeah. Senator Strobel.

[00:58:41] No, **Sen. Johnson**. Sorry. Thanks. Just a quick a reading question. Yep. Just a quick follow up. I think it's, you know, as we're, you know, the, the lesson as we're pulling it from Mississippi is we're, we're very much focused on what they did, kindergarten, first grade, second grade, third grade. And, and, and I agree, and I think we all agree that what they did was amazing to be able to say that we are going to invest a [00:59:00] concerted level of resources.

[00:59:01] And I really like that she said that it wasn't formulaic. They said, we are gonna devote this level of funds to it. So as much as we on this committee, I think, you know, need to hear it, um, y you know that there is, um, if we're gonna be focused on one specific problem, we can change that one specific outcome.

[00:59:18] But, you know, Mr. Chair, um, with respect, if we're gonna look at the entire educational ecosystem, it's worth looking at the entire elephant and not just an eyelash. So with that, you know, I, I would say, would you agree that what Mississippi did and was able to do was because of those devoted level of resources over 10 years?

[00:59:39] I think we said 144.5 million, that it wasn't just, we are going to give you a magic wand of a, of a, of a book on phonics that it was the, the specialist that went along with it. Real brief. Yeah. Yes, please. I mean, it's, it's a both end approach, right? Like you're, you're holding hands. Right. Okay. [01:00:00] **Senator Johnson**, thank you.

[01:00:02] Um, I noticed that, um, the last speaker, well, first of all, the fact that in 2013 they spent nine and a half million dollars to start their program, which was over 10 years ago. So my question to you is that, I know you mentioned the 24 coaches, the \$10 million, but. Our last speaker broke down some of the efforts that their money is being spent on, like 61% was for litera, literally literary.

[01:00:35] Yeah. Support that one. And 17% statewide professional development with an additional 15%, 2.2 million for one readiness assessment for universal screeners. So my question to you is the 20, the 10 million that you're requesting, the 24 um coaches that you're talking about [01:01:00] hiring, is that gonna be enough funding to implement these other things too?

[01:01:06] And I know she said that this money is in addition to the education funds that are, that are already allocated. So if you look at the additional money that's spent just for your early learners, And that doesn't include the rest of the system K through 12. It's just the early learners. Roughly around how much, and I don't know if you can

answer this, would DPI be looking at to implement a program similar to that that's in Mississippi?

[01:01:37] Is the 10 million going to be enough that, um, you're requesting for the 24 coaches in order to implement a program to that extent? **Tom McCarthy DPI:** So I think we, we were trying to cost something that would be reasonable and politically solvent. Um, I think you heard Senator Strobel raising some very legitimate concerns around costs and ability to continue to fund things going forward.

[01:01:58] You wanna talk about what it would take to do Mississippi and [01:02:00] Wisconsin. Mississippi has an enrollment of around 450,000 kids. We have around 850. If you count privates and make them eligible, you're at about just under a million. So essentially double what Mississippi did. If you want to do exactly what Mississippi did, you have a reasonable cost.

[01:02:16] Okay. **Senator Stroebel.** Yeah, I want to talk about, you know, reading, but as long as we're hung up on finances, I'll being on joint finance, I gotta throw a few things out there. Okay. Keep it And, uh, well first off, sorry, liaison. Okay. There was a comment made that, um, Dr. Burk said about hiring retired people.

[01:02:37] Halftime, well, you can actually hire retired people two-thirds time in Wisconsin. So keep that in mind. Um, and they lose no retirement benefits whatsoever. But, um, again, just, just getting back to, I think we gotta look at the big picture. We gotta look at census data. We gotta look at all funds, all sources, uh, 13,000 to 9,000.

[01:02:58] So I think if we [01:03:00] do things the right way, we can have better results. And it, I think we've seen studies that show you can spend a whole lot of money and sometimes you don't get any educational benefit whatsoever. And I think where we are with reading right now, teaching a flawed system that we have to change, I think we're, we're seeing that in real time.

[01:03:16] So thanks. **Tom McCarthy DPI:** Yeah. I would say change costs money and I know that you're a gentleman who, um, I think you have some nice land, right? You own a house. Well, imagine that house. I own a house. Yeah. Imagine that house in Mississippi. And imagine how much the property value would deflate. I mean, I I, there is a real difference in economy between the state of Mississippi and the state of Wisconsin and not acknowledging that is disingenuous.

[01:03:38] I mean, I think they are different economic circumstances in the states that cause costs to do business to look completely different. **Sen Stroebel:** Um, I agree. I'm not sure if we agree on the same things. So thanks, representative. **Rep Dave Considine:** We've had earlier a bunch of discussion about curriculum and I wanted to, and I'm, I'm glad you [01:04:00] addressed that somewhat.

[01:04:01] But I wanna talk a little bit about, I think Wisconsin is really ahead of the curve in our academic standards for reading especially, I was sitting here reading those today and we're a local control state. But our academic standards for reading, I think

model, what I have heard suggested, I went to the thing last week, is exactly what our standards suggest.

[01:04:28] They are a combination of science, of reading, balanced literacy, whatever you wanna call it, but they're not a specific one. But they address every skill and at each grade level what a child needs to know phonetically and about phonemes in addition to word recognition, in addition to comprehension at at every level, from kindergarten through 12th grade.

[01:04:52] Just can we, how do we get, I guess the question is how do we get those [01:05:00] academic standards, because I really think that's what we need to do is get those academic standards that we already have to drive our instruction.

[01:05:12] **Laura Adams DPI:** Yes, . So, uh, the first thing that, the first thing that I will say is, uh, that thank you for, for recognizing the very robust, um, academic standards that we have in the state. One thing that I want to point out is that our standards in the area of reading foundational skills, which are based on evidence-based reading, instructional practices, go through fifth grade.

[01:05:36] So we do also, um, I'm just referring back to an earlier part of, of the day today when we were really referencing the fact that we can't stop teaching reading at third grade. Our academic standards reflects that, that we need to continue instruction in the teaching of reading through, through fifth grade.

[01:05:57] And I think that's part of [01:06:00] why we are more interested in, uh, criteria for instructional materials. Rather than specific titles. Um, obviously our criteria would lead to specific titles and a recommended list of specific titles, but that's exactly why. Um, it's, it's so important to, to start with, with the criteria.

[01:06:21] And one of our criteria would, um, would be those robust academic standards that we, that we have.

[01:06:36] **Rep Donna Roar R-Marshfield:** Uh, thank you Mr. Chairman. I wanted to springboard on, uh, thank you for coming today. I really appreciate it. Um, I wanted to springboard on something that you just said about continued instruction after the third and fourth grade. I learned it one time that after the fourth grade, not a whole lot was done if readers hadn't gotten it by.

[01:06:56] So can you address just a little bit about what you do [01:07:00] to help people who haven't gotten it by the third or fourth grade to catch up? Because if the emphasis is just on reading up to the third and fourth grade, they, and they haven't gotten it, they don't have a chance to read, to learn for the rest of their, uh, educational experience or the rest of their life.

[01:07:19] So can you explain a little bit about interventions that are done for people who haven't gotten it by the third or fourth grade, please? **Laura Adams DPI:** Yeah. I won't go into a whole lot of, uh, weedy detail about that here, but, um, what I will say

is that this question is, is also wrapped up in our statutorily required handbook for dyslexia and related conditions.

[01:07:41] And one of the things that we offer in that handbook are a series of questions, questions that educators should ask, questions that families should ask about reading and reading instruction. . And if I, if I have a, if I have a child in front of me who is in the fourth grade [01:08:00] and who is not performing in the area of reading, the first thing that I need to do is I need to figure out why, which probably means that I need to engage in some more diagnostic testing because I need to know the exact underlying issues.

[01:08:16] And we, we haven't even talked about diagnostic testing here today, but that is absolutely a really important piece of the puzzle. And that's actually something that, um, the state of Michigan does is not only do they require that reading readiness screener for all students, they also have a requirement where for students that perform below benchmark on that screener, the educators are further required to engage in diagnostic screening to really accurately identify what are the underlying issues so that they can be addressed.

[01:08:47] Because it's not the same for, for every child. And, and I think that's really important to notice, to note, um, also related to this conversation is the fact that not all screeners are [01:09:00] built the same, right? We know that some screeners that exist on the market today are computer adaptive, which means that you have two, you a child answers the question one way and that determines whether or not their next question is more difficult or easier.

[01:09:15] And what that means is that if I have two children who have the same score, that does not mean they have the same reading needs at all. I need to dig further into that.

[01:09:28] Final question. I think **Representative Shelton** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will make this quick. I, uh, generally have a question about forward and NAEP. It's my understanding that those two assessments broadly assess comprehension and not decoding and phonics not reading itself. So I am curious twofold. One is, if the, if the.

[01:09:50] Those assessments give us an accurate picture of where Wisconsin students are today and their reading ability as it pertains to phonics and decoding. [01:10:00] And two, if the state was to make any changes in the, in the program and to shift and support our teachers and do all the things we've talked about, would we then also have to, uh, look at our assessments, assessments to make sure that they continue to give us the best data and information moving forward?

[01:10:15] **Laura Adams DPI:** Yeah. Thank you for that question. Uh, our assessments. Third grade on up are absolutely assessments of, of comprehension, and we use comprehension as, as a proxy, right? For, for making some kind of, um, guesses about the, the reading ability and the reading foundational skills that our students have. Those reading readiness screeners are the ones that, um, that are really more focused for from

4K through grade two, are the assessments that are more focused on identifying those underlying reading foundational skills, which is why, why they're so critical, uh, and.

[01:10:56] We, we do know that the assessment that we currently have in [01:11:00] place is, is not an assessment of reading between grades three and eight. It is an assessment of English language arts, which includes reading, comprehension and writing, and the application of, uh, certain kind of grammar, academic grammar and listening.

[01:11:15] Um, and, and so right now, the way that our test is, is constructed, we can't really pull reading out of that, but I will say that, um, that is a move that we are looking to make, um, moving into the, into the future. We're currently in a position where we are, uh, beginning to, just beginning to, um, ***have discussions about constructing a new state summative assessment that would allow us to have a reading specific component for students in grades three through eight.***

[01:11:47] **Rep Kristina Shelton** Just to follow up, if, if we move to a standard, um, reading readiness screener, Would that data help us to better understand the students decoding and phonics ability in the grades, uh, up [01:12:00] leading up to third grade if you have the, uh, the tools to know how to act on that data? **Laura Adams DPI:** Yes, I think it comes down to that, right, because just having a score right does not necessarily mean that I have the knowledge and expertise to know how to appropriately intervene.

[01:12:16] So having that data is valuable and could absolutely tell us some, uh, tell us some things, but, um, for the teacher in the classroom, it's all, it's all about having the tools to be able to act on that data. So it's a both and I guess. Okay. Thanks so much for coming in and thank you for your patience and working with our shift there a little bit and plan to continue to work with you.

[01:12:38] So thanks.

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